

**Indiana Trails Advisory Board
June 21, 2012 – 3:00 PM
Indiana Dunes State Park
1600 North 25 East, Chesterton, IN 46304**

Minutes

Board Members Present:

Tim Garrett – All Terrain Vehicle Users
Yvette Rollins – Equestrians
Mark Price - Four Wheel Drive Users
Tim Calahan – Hikers
Jeff Fetterer – Mountain Bike Users
Tom Hartman - Off-Road Motorcyclists
Melody Jones – Parks and Recreation Agencies
Donald Sporleder – Pedestrians
Len Neisler - Snowmobilers
Melisa Culbertson – Trail Support Groups
Ric Edwards – Users with Disabilities
Daniel Plath – Water Trail Users

Proxies:

Anne Ellis – Bicyclists

DNR Staff:

Bob Bronson
David Cox
Becky Hughes

Guests:

Susan Baugher
Tracina Cross
Jay Jackson
Paul Kohler
Ed Rosary
Mike Siefer
Steve Sovle
Joann Sporleder
George Thomas
Nancy Thomas
Ron Thomas
Troy Wolford

Welcome

Chairwoman Yvette Rollins welcomed everyone. She thanked Melisa Culbertson for hosting the meeting and providing the food.

Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves.

Review and Approval of March 2012 Minutes

Tom Hartman moved to approve the minutes. Tim Garrett seconded. Motion carried.

Department Report

David Cox thanked Melisa Culbertson for hosting the meeting. He also thanked the Dunes State Park staff for facilitating the property tour.

Ethics Training – TAB members were reminded to complete the state ethics training online course. Those who don't comply risk being removed from the board.

Knobstone Trail – A handout was presented which included timber harvest re-routes and a closed section of the KT.

Park Plans – Communities with expiring park master plans receive a letter from Greg Beilfuss one year ahead so they have plenty of time to remain current. Don Sporleder asked if there is help for small communities which have expired plans but no money for a new plan. David said there is assistance

available on the website where small towns can literally use a fill-in-the-blank plan. He recommended contacting Greg for help.

Old Business

Hoosier Outdoor Experience – David encouraged all user groups to participate in the Hoosier Outdoor Experience on September 15-16, 2012 from 9am-6pm each day. A brief overview was given of the event for those unfamiliar with HOE.

2012 Trails Conference – Chairwoman Yvette Rollins started discussion about the trails conference by expressing disappointment in the lack of response from TAB members. She stressed the importance a conference could be for training volunteers to build trails. Dan Plath said water trails segments might focus on protecting fish habitats yet keeping a waterway open enough to canoe/kayak through it. He said his problem with the conference is it's the same date he's attending the Great Lakes Conference in Michigan. Tom Hartman said the Evansville Trails Coalition is strongly committed to help with the trails conference.

Yvette asked about making the conference a workshop. Melisa Culbertson said she preferred a workshop with what the group was planning. She didn't know how she could participate with what was originally planned but she could participate in a workshop. In her opinion, the focus was too broad but narrowing it down to just trail building makes more sense. Jeff Fetterer likes the idea of getting something together and embracing the idea of it. Tom Hartman said maybe a year from now more people would understand what the idea is. Ric Edwards asked what would happen to the funds that had already been allotted if the conference was pushed back. Yvette replied TAB does not have to spend the money this year. The money will not go away and it can be redirected. Bob Bronson added the money is RTP education funds.

Melody Jones said meeting once a quarter makes it difficult to get something organized. She believes if there is a 2013 conference, TAB must develop sub-committees to meet outside the regular meetings. Everything needs to be in place before promoting the event. Yvette replied that some sub-committees were formed in the March meeting. Those committees haven't done much or had member buy-in yet.

Len Neisler said his biggest concern is he doesn't know how you can focus on the conference without having set topics. He feels now that we are discussing doing actual trail work, TAB is starting to get a clearer focus. Ideas could spring from that plan. Melody asked if professionals would help with trail building. Yvette replied we have expert trail builders who could be brought in to teach all aspects of trail building - both non-motorized and motorized. Multi-use trail development could be featured. Dan Plath likes a workshop format because it's a need that is not being met. Tim Garrett said Yvette was correct that we need to look at both non-motorized and motorized trail building taught by experts.

Tom Hartman reported there are ways to contain conference costs for attendees. He gave some examples. Yvette said there could be an 80/20 grant match for some attendees. Much more discussion followed about different aspects of trail building. Melisa Culbertson suggested doing multiple facets of trail building. Interlake was recommended as a good workshop location since it has various trail uses. Everyone agreed Interlake would be great for trail building. Anne Ellis likes the ability to draw on various interests for the conference.

Mark Price asked if the DNR is looking for land in northern Indiana for OHV use. While the conference is a great thing, many northerners feel disconnected because of a lack of motorized facilities. There could be more OHV participation with the conference if there was a plan for the north. He said the north is in serious need of a motorized property. David Cox replied the state is currently not buying up land for OHV use with budget constraints in place. He said it would be great to have northern Indiana OHV property but funds are limited. He said the state always has the door open for anyone to talk about any properties or ideas. However, funds are stretched thin already. David said the only motorized activity in the north was the snowmobile program.

Len Neisler mentioned the snowmobile program is very well organized but it takes much work to be successful. He doesn't believe snowmobilers would be enthusiastic about this kind of conference. He thinks they would be more interested in how to get people motivated about trail building. Len said there needs to be a way to get more youth involved. He also recommended a centrally located conference instead of a remote area like Evansville.

David encouraged TAB to first focus on what they want to accomplish with a conference and then plan on how to do it. He said if people are interested in the topic they will travel to an event. Melody said we must remember that not everybody is interested in the same things. If TAB hosts a conference that attempts to encompass all aspects of every group, there will always be a group that is not interested. Melody suggested looking at a conference with several different interests which would appeal to most users. This would allow people to experience trails outside their preferred use. Yvette agreed with learning another type of trail building. When you understand another's needs it benefits all trail users. She would have never experienced the Dunes if not for TAB. Sharing interests with others opens understanding.

Some discussion followed about multi-use trails being the conference focus. Anne Ellis stated that as a recreational biker and hiker she doesn't think she wants to compete on a trail with something moving fast and making a lot of noise. Tim Calahan replied that he had been on shared trails and he was amazed at the courtesy shown.

Yvette said the conference focus is to bring trail users together to learn how to share trails and have more trails for everyone. It's all about education. Attendees can talk about ADA, funding and various things. Those topics can be incorporated into a plenary session prior to the hands on workshops. Yvette explained that before trail building begins people must know the fundamentals and strategies behind making trails successful. A combined educational conference/workshop would include both presentations and field work.

Yvette told TAB they must make decisions about the conference. TAB in a previous meeting decided to have the conference but when the conference will be held is a critical decision. Sub-committees must get to work. Tom Hartman moved to re-schedule the conference/workshop to November 2013. Tim Garrett seconded. Motion carried.

Save-the-date cards will be sent after potential conflicts are determined. The conference will not conflict with the American Trails Symposium or the Mid America Trails and Greenways conference. Yvette

reminded everyone of committee assignments. David suggested getting event dates to Yvette within the next two weeks. If everyone concurs, the conference/workshop will be the first weekend in November. Jeff Fetterer asked every group to send him potential speaker information.

Other Business

Off-Road Trails in Northern Indiana - Mark Price announced they recently had an event at the AM General test facility. The event included jeeps as well as Hummers. He said the 2nd in command of AM General discussed the property with him. Due to light volume and slow sales, there needs to be further conversation about the 450 acres of property for OHV use. Mark is going to contact DNR Director of Land Acquisition Nick Heinzelman about the land. The other OHV opportunity the Illiana group is looking into is a former steel mill property. It is not being used, has lake front views and would be the only kind of OHV park of its kind. The property is about 200 acres. Dan Plath recommended watching for property auctions and appealing directly to the Governor's Office or DNR. Mark said besides the Illiana Hummer Club that the Michiana Jeepers and Iron Horse Club are also interested in developing an OHV area. The Michiana Jeepers have over 7,000 website followers and over 200 paid members.

New Business

RTP Grants/Updates/Past Projects - Bob Bronson presented TAB with a list of RTP applications received in 2012. He said projects were rated and ranked by an objective process. Funds must be distributed with 30% motorized, 30%, non-motorized, and 40% discretionary. Of the discretionary funds, a maximum of 5% can be used for education, a maximum of 7% can be used for administration, and the other can be used for either motorized or non-motorized projects. He discussed how funds could be allotted for the approved funding. He explained if additional funds were received how they would be distributed. The present highway bill extension expires at the end of June. Twelve applications were received. Seven percent will be used for administration. It was recommended 50% of the allocation go to motorized. The motorized portion will go to Interlake for a gate house and maintenance building. The non-motorized projects recommended include the Colfax Farm Heritage Trail and the Whitestown Farm Heritage Trail at \$150,000 each. Two projects tied (McCordsville Trail and City Center Trail) so those monies were split at \$110,000 each. Bob said if Indiana actually gets full funding, then they can grant more money for projects.

Bob was asked why more grants did not go to northern Indiana. He replied it's all in who applies and how the projects score. Projects have been awarded throughout the state and can be found in the handout on past projects. Bob said he feels they are not spending enough money in the south. It traditionally goes north. Bob explained we don't take any cold projects. The DNR meets with each applicant over the criteria, visits the site, and goes over what they are doing. The DNR meets with each applicant before they even apply.

Yvette added the information is all online. The motorized monies have funded a couple of ABATE projects in Lawrence County but most awards have gone to Redbird and Interlake. Bob handed out a sheet listing a complete history of the program. Awards have totalled about \$14 million dollars since 1994. Bob said projects that are not approved can be re-submitted. Don Sporleder moved to approve the recommendations as presented. Melody Jones seconded. Motion carried unanimously

User Group Reports

All Terrain Vehicle Users – Tim Garrett reported the Redbird Foundation hosts several themed events. All activities are posted on its website.

Bicyclists – Anne Ellis reported Bicycle Indiana held a bike summit in Columbus that brought the community together. Columbus and Ft. Wayne received bicycle friendly community status from the League of America Bicyclists. They will host more workshops to help businesses understand how to become a bicycle friendly business. They also have a program for Driver's Education classes about motorists and bicyclists.

Environmental Groups – No report given.

Equestrians – Yvette Rollins announced she is attending the American Horse Council Issues Forum in Washington, D.C. where they will discuss issues facing equestrians. Work days are scheduled in Hoosier National Forest and Hickory Ridge. They have been training a group of Indiana kids to work on trails.

Four Wheel Drive Users – Mark Price stated that events are taking off now that summer has arrived. Momentum is good with fundraising, parades and community involvement by four wheel drive organizations. Clubs are doing well with only two clubs showing a decrease in membership. Better working relationships are emerging among four wheel drive users. Jeep and Hummer enthusiasts recently had an event together.

Higher Education/Health – No report given.

Hikers – Tim Calahan stated the Hoosier Hiker's Council sponsors several trail runs each year. Increased enthusiasm and participation is evident in the trail runs. The last trail run at Morgan-Monroe had 250 people. They are talking to D.I.N.O. about an ultra marathon which is 50 miles.

Mountain Bike Users – Jeff Fetterer reported they just completed the Midwest Women's Mountain Biking Clinic with over 150 women attending the clinic. HMBA completed a new 3-mile trail section at Ft. Benjamin Harrison SP. They received a \$10,000 grant from REI which helped fund the trail. The 100-mile Brown County Breakdown is October 12-14. They are GPSing trails at O'Bannon Woods SP.

Off-Road Motorcyclists – Tom Hartman stated the Interlake project is progressing. New staff will be hired and a gatehouse and out-building are in the works. A motorcycle group held an event there and donated \$1,500 to the friends group. Concrete work has been completed along with a shelter near the main parking lot. Rock crawling stations with six different levels of difficulty are finished.

Parks & Recreation Agencies – Melody Jones reported Westfield celebrated National Trails Day by reaching out to people who normally don't use trails. They targeted geo-cache enthusiasts. Prior to the start of the geo-cache search, participants picked up trash for an hour along the trail. She also said Hamilton County worked with INDOT to get 3 dedicated trail crossings on the US31 freeway project and every intersection will have sidewalks on both sides. The Indianapolis MPO has been working on regional bicycle/pedestrian plans. Indianapolis is discussing a Complete Streets policy.

Pedestrians – Don Sporleder said Complete Streets is important to promote to communities. Various groups working together can emphasize the health related aspects of walking and using trails. He stressed the importance of Safe Routes to School. Don announced the annual paddle fest will be in St. Patrick's Park in St. Joseph County.

Snowmobilers – Len Neisler had to leave for another meeting so no report was given.

Trail Support Groups – Melisa Culbertson reported she had been working with trail groups on property acquisition. One group worked hard for several years to acquire property but finally gave up. About three months ago, the property owner passed away. Unbeknown to the trail group, the property owner had decided to will the property to the group. The trail group found themselves in a position where they could

not accept it. Melisa stressed the importance of trail groups being prepared to accept property by partnering with the DNR, other governmental units, or a non-profit organization.

Users with Disabilities – Ric Edwards addressed Yvette Rollins' mention of wheel chairs designed for sand. Yvette attended a conference where a wheel chair built for beach access was demonstrated. Ric said he was aware of the chairs but cautioned they have their problems. He said transferring into one is a challenge because the wheels are much bigger which makes it harder to get into it. Also, a person is at the mercy of the person steering it so you risk being stranded. He said Dunes SP along with several other state parks have four wheel drive wheel chairs available.

Water Trail Users – Daniel Plath reported the NWIPA is getting its first ADA compliant canoe/kayak launch installed. He said it will be completed this year in Michigan City. The project will be paid for by several contributors including the DNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program. NW Indiana had no canoe liveries until this year when two will open by early July. They are working with the National Park Service on the effects of removing log jams on waterways. The study will help develop best practices which could be applied nationwide for log jam removals. Dan also spoke about several other projects they are working on around the region including developing overnight camp sites on the Kankakee River.

Announcements

Hoosier Outdoor Experience – September 15-16, 2012 Ft. Harrison SP

Future Meeting Dates

September 6 – Redbird State Riding Area

December 6 – Indiana Government Center

Adjournment

Jeff Fetterer moved for adjournment. Melisa Culbertson seconded. Motion carried.